

Fact Sheet

December 4, 2000

PROPOSED AIR TOXICS STANDARDS FOR POLYVINYL CHLORIDE AND COPOLYMERS PRODUCTION FACILITIES

TODAY'S ACTION

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing national standards to limit air toxic emissions from polyvinyl chloride (PVC) or copolymers production plants. PVC plants manufacture a variety of PVC raw and end products.
- Air toxics, also called hazardous air pollutants, are those pollutants known, or suspected to, cause cancer or other serious human health problems. Air toxics emitted from polyvinyl chloride and copolymers production facilities include vinyl chloride, vinyl acetate and vinylidene chloride.
- The proposed emissions standards would be the same as those in the existing air toxic standard for vinyl chloride. Vinyl chloride, the primary feed stock used in PVC production, is associated with liver cancer in humans. Acute, short-term exposure to vinyl chloride can cause dizziness, drowsiness and headaches.
- The proposed would regulate air toxic emissions from process vents, reactor openings, storage and transfer operations, equipment leaks, waste, and would reduce residual air toxics in the PVC products. The standards for new and existing sources are the same.
- The requirements under today's proposal (and under the existing vinyl chloride rule) will reduce emissions of vinyl chloride, vinyl acetate and vinylidene chloride to the extent that they already are controlled by the vinyl chloride emissions standards. Between 1986 and 1996, reported air toxic emissions dropped 400 tons per year through improved plant operations encouraged by the vinyl chloride rule.
- The proposed rule also requires the same reductions for volatile organic compounds (VOCs) as the vinyl chloride rule. VOCs contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone (smog), which can aggravate asthma and other respiratory conditions, and can damage crops and other plants.
- There are no costs associated with this proposed rule. The rule will affect about 28 existing facilities that are major sources of air toxics, plus any similar facilities built in the future. Major sources are those that have the potential to emit 10 tons a year or more of a single air toxic, or 25 tons a year or more of a combination of toxics.
- EPA worked with industry representatives and state and local agencies to develop the proposed rule.
- Because the proposed rule would set emissions standards based upon the existing vinyl chloride rule, it will eliminate the potential for duplicate or conflicting requirements.

BACKGROUND

- The Clean Air Act requires EPA to develop rules that require facilities to meet emissions standards reflecting the highest level of emissions control possible with current technology. Such standards are known as "maximum achievable control technology," or MACT.
- EPA issued the vinyl chloride air toxics rule in 1976 and continues to reduce air toxics emissions today. The vinyl chloride rule has sharply reduced air toxic emissions by requiring specific limits and encouraging tighter operation designs and reduced reactor opening frequencies.
- Over time, PVC production capacity in the United States has increased while the number of production plants has been reduced, and reported VCM emissions have steadily declined. Reported emissions dropped 400 tons per year between 1986 and 1996 through improved plant operations encouraged by this rule.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- For more information about today's proposal, contact Warren Johnson of EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-5124. The proposed rule is available on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.epa.gov/ttncaaa1/t3pfpr.html>.
- EPA's Office of Air and Radiation home page on the Internet contains a wide range of information on the air toxics program and many other air pollution programs and issues. The address is: <http://www.epa.gov/oar>.